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# An evaluation of the Atlantic adult education program

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AN EVALUATION  
OF THE  
ATLANTIC ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM

---

A Field Study  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Graduate College  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Specialist in Educational Administration

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by  
John Kenneth Hunter  
May 1971

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Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College of  
the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree Specialist in Educational  
Administration.

Graduate Committee

<u>Daniel Kellams</u>	<u>Ed. Ad.</u>
Name	Department
<u>E. S. Carter</u>	<u>Speech</u>

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Kenneth Bushholder  
Chairman

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACCEPTANCE PAGE	ii
LIST OF TABLES.	"
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	
A DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL	
THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS	
Statement of the Problem .	
Purpose of the Study .	
Definition of Terms.	
The Plan of the Study.	
2. RELATED LITERATURE .	5
3. THE STUDY.	11
GROUP STUDIED .	11
METHOD OF PROCEDURE .	13
FINDINGS. . . . .	14
4. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.	22
SUMMARY	22
RECOMMENDATIONS	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	27
APPENDIX. .	29
A. The Questionnaire Sent to Each Student	30

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	Page
B. Form Letter from the Director of Adult Education Sent to Each Qualified Student Enclosing the Questionnaire. . . . .	32
. Form Letter Enclosing the Questionnaire Sent to Each Qualified Student Who Had Not Replied to the First Letter and Questionnaire. . . . .	33

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
. An Analysis of the Occupational Status and Sex of 266 Student Participants in the Adult Education Program. . . . .	12
II. Rating of Adult Education Subjects Studied by 266 Participants in the Study in the Area of Employment Capability. . . . .	17
III. Rating of Adult Education Subjects Studied by 266 Participants in the Study in the Area of Academic Ability . . . . .	18
IV. Rating of Adult Education Subjects Studied by 266 Participants in the Study in the Area of Self Image . . . . .	19
. An Analysis of the Number of Adult Education Students Doing Passing Work in the General Educational Development Test by Subject Area	20

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### A DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

Atlantic, Iowa, is a city of approximately seventy-five hundred persons which has shown a slight increase in population during a period in which there was a decline in the population of southwestern Iowa.

The Atlantic Community School System enrolls slightly more than twenty-six hundred students, roughly half of the students in the county. Approximately one fourth of the students are from farm homes or live outside the Atlantic city limits. The high school enrolls seven hundred fifty students in grades nine through twelve, and three hundred seventy-five students in grades seven and eight. Facilities include, one senior high building, one junior high building, and five elementary buildings.

The Atlantic School System is part of Area XIII Community School District, one of sixteen such divisions in the state. This Area School is designated as Iowa Western Community College and includes an Arts and Science school and a Vocational Technical school with satellite schools in vocational technical education and adult education. One of these satellite schools is located at Atlantic and is the subject of this study.



## THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

### Statement of the Problem

The problem may be stated as follows: To what extent has the Atlantic adult education program been successful in meeting its objectives as determined by the opinions of the participants and to some extent by their scores on the General Educational Development Test.

In cooperation with the Iowa Western Community College, the Atlantic Board of Education inaugurated an adult education program in 1967. In establishing the adult education program the Board hoped that it would enable adults to increase their employment capability, improve their academic achievement, and raise their self-image. The Board of Education was concerned with the accomplishments of the program in helping adult students. This study was undertaken in order to determine the program success as seen by student opinion.

The achievement of the program objectives, to be fully established, would need to take into account other factors such as motivation, learnings obtained in everyday contact with society: knowledge acquired by experience through success and failure.

### Purpose of the Study

The results of this study will provide the Atlantic Board of Education with information regarding the extent to

which the program has met its objectives and thereby enable them to project the future of the adult education program. If the objectives of the program, in the opinion of the Board, are not being achieved to their satisfaction, the program will need to be changed. If the degree of achievement is satisfactory, the program can be expanded to include other objectives.

#### Definition of Terms

Adult education. The educational program course offerings for those persons eighteen years of age or older who are able to benefit from such instruction, as provided by the Atlantic Community School District in cooperation with Iowa Western Community College.

High school equivalency program. An educational program for adults who want or need to have the equivalent of a high school diploma.

General educational development tests. The state administered tests at the high school level which are comprised of five examinations designed to measure the extent to which the non-high school graduate has attained the equivalent of a non-technical high school education.

High school equivalency certificate. The certificate issued by the State Department of Public Instruction to those persons who have achieved at least minimum standard of

proficiency in the General Educational Development Tests.

### The Plan of the Study

This study has been organized around four topics and a chapter has been devoted to each. Following the introduction, the literature in the field of adult education has been reviewed. Chapter three describes the adults studied, the methods of securing data, and the findings of the investigator. Chapter four summarizes the study and presents the recommendations.

## Chapter 2

### A REVIEW OF LITERATURE PERTINENT TO THE STUDY

Adult education is a partial answer to the impending obsolescence of man, and this answer is being sought by increasing numbers of Americans. The adult education profession is only thirty-four years old; and yet, in 1968 thirty million American adults, one fourth of the United States population over twenty-one years of age, returned to school.

In his article, Thirty Million Adults go to School, J. Eugene Welden lists five general purposes of adult education which are as follows:

1. Fundamental literacy education in order for the student to acquire the basic skill tools of reading, writing and computing.
- . Education for vocational technical, or professional competence, to help the student get a job---upgrade his position or update him on new developments in his present job.
3. Education for health, welfare and family living.
4. Education for civic, political, and community competence.
- . The broad area of education for self-improvement in which people pursue individual interests or improve their skills.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. Eugene Welden, "Thirty Million Adults go to School," American Education, 5:11-13, November, 1969.

Much of adult education today is sporadic and unsystematic. It must become sequential and relevant to both community life and to the lives of individuals, and not a hodgepodge presentation of learning experiences without plan.

Reeves, et al., state in their book, Adult Education, that if adult education programs are to attain a useful and permanent place in the total educational program they must be carefully evaluated. The first principle of an adult education program is that it must be adjustable so as to meet the needs of the adults concerned. "The program that is decided upon must have clearly stated, measurable objectives if the administrator is to be able to gather evidence that the program is worth the cost."<sup>2</sup> The objectives must be based on what they do for people, not to them. Education which says it will change a person does not fit at all that person who does not want to be changed. The investigator was unable to find in Reeves, any statement to clarify his meaning in the last sentence above. In the opinion of the investigator, students are in adult education classes because they want to be: they are motivated because of a need or a want. Adult students buy education for themselves much as they buy education for their children, for what it will do for them. A person who

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<sup>2</sup>F. W. Reeves, T. Fansler, and C. C. Houle, Adult Education. (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1938), p. 399.

seeks to improve himself academically, in employability, or self-image, is expecting change not only in himself, but more importantly in his life as a result of the change.

Paul Essert, according to his book, Creative Leadership of Adult Education, believes that to be successful, the adult education leader must develop the skill of evaluation. "A sense of growth and maturing and a feeling that he is effective in his work is as fundamental to the creative adult educator as it is to those with whom he works."<sup>3</sup>

J. Richard Smith notes in his article Criteria for Evaluating Instruction that, "evaluation is an integral part of instruction and that the teacher should work with the students to develop standards for self evaluation. Evaluation should consider tests, participation, and individual progress and performance."<sup>4</sup>

In his book Public School Adult Education, John Thatcher describes evaluation as, "the process of assessing the degree to which one is achieving his objectives."<sup>5</sup> He feels that for an adult education program to be properly

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<sup>3</sup>Paul L. Essert, Creative Leadership of Adult Education. (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1951), p. 274.

<sup>4</sup>J. Richard Smith, "Criteria for Evaluating Instruction," California Education, 1:7-8, April, 1964.

<sup>5</sup>John H. Thatcher, Public School Adult Education. (Washington, D. C.: National Association of Public School Educators, 1963), p. 175.

evaluated it must first of all state its objectives in such terms that evidence of the degree to which those objectives are being achieved can be obtained.

Thatcher sees two primary purposes in evaluation. First, evaluation is for improvement of the program. The results of the evaluation are interpreted in light of the objectives and the program can be corrected if necessary. New needs may be seen as a result of the evaluation and the program changed to meet these needs. Evaluation may also determine that program objectives are faulty and that a review of them may be necessary.

Second, evaluation of the program provides the administrator with evidence to support increased budget requests, and program change or expansion. When school boards and the public can be shown evidence that students are making satisfactory progress toward goals that they have determined desirable the administrator can justify the total program.

The purposes of evaluation may be many but the primary purpose as observed by Coolie Verner in his book, Adult Education," is to find out how much growth and change have taken place as a result of the educational experiences."<sup>6</sup> In setting objectives for the adult program Verner would determine what objectives he seeks to achieve and state them

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<sup>6</sup>Coolie Verner, Adult Education. (Washington, D. C.: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1960), p. 91.

as an ideal. He notes that not all program objectives can be put in measurable terms today because we have not discovered instruments capable of measuring all things that may result from an educational experience. There are objectives that can be measured however, The General Educational Development Test has both reliability and validity in terms of the population upon which it was standardized. This test battery measures the degree of academic achievement of the participants at the non-technical high school level.

Morgan, et al., in their book, Methods in Adult Education note that, "evaluations may be classified according to their degree of formality and precision. Evaluation may be informal, semi-formal, or formal scientific research."<sup>7</sup>

Information obtained by means of informal evaluation would be gathered by informal tests, talking to students outside the classroom and by noting changes in practices.

Semi-formal evaluation, the type used by this investigator, is more systematic and reliable than informal evaluation. Most of the evidence used in this class of evaluation comes from reliable and valid tests, surveys to determine changes, and objective rating sheets.

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<sup>7</sup>Barton Morgan, Glen E. Holmes, and Clarence E. Bundy, Methods in Adult Education. (Danville, Illinois: Interstate Press, 1960), pp. 151-55.



Formal evaluation is a type of research in which all the pertinent facts are gathered and subjected to statistical procedures.

Morgan, et al., believes in the use of definite objectives and that any plan of evaluation should be based upon the degree to which these objectives have been realized. They also feel that evaluation must be concerned with getting evidence as to the degree that changes have taken place in the students behavior, practices, skills and richness of living.

The literature reviewed was selected as the most current and pertinent in the field. Publication dates range from 1948 through 1971. No evaluation studies were found in the survey of the literature. The information in the literature was confined to author opinion as to the value of evaluation and the necessity of formulating clear, measurable objectives so that the degree of achievement could be determined.

## Chapter 3

### THE STUDY

This study was instigated because of the need to determine the effectiveness of the Atlantic adult education program in order to correctly plan future offerings to be presented to the community. It is primarily limited to relevance to the program at Atlantic and yet the findings of this investigator are worthy of consideration by any group planning for an adult education program, or for those interested in the evaluation of a similar program of another school.

### GROUP STUDIED

The group studied by this investigator consisted of persons who enrolled in, and completed a course of study in the adult education program conducted jointly by Iowa Western Community College and the Atlantic Community School District during a three year period from 1968 through 1970. Table I provides an analysis of the occupational status and sex of those surveyed. As can be seen, the students were predominantly women who were housewives, or were working full time for pay.

TABLE I  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE OCCUPATIONAL  
STATUS AND SEX OF 266 STUDENT  
PARTICIPANTS IN THE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Status	Male	Female
Working for pay, full time	24	68
Working for pay, part time	4	32
In business for self	12	8
In armed forces	0	0
Not working but looking for a job	0	4
Not working and not looking for a job	0	12
Housewife	0	88
Other	0	14
Total	40	226

## METHOD OF PROCEDURE

From the permanent class records of the Atlantic adult education classes, a list of students who had completed a minimum of one course in the classes of 1968 to 1970 inclusive was prepared. When the list was completed a questionnaire was sent to each student.<sup>1</sup> A total of 298 questionnaires were mailed to qualified students. A form letter from the director of adult education accompanied each questionnaire.<sup>2</sup> After a period of five weeks had elapsed another letter and a duplicate form of the original questionnaire was mailed to those students who had not responded to the original request.<sup>3</sup> A total of 266 responses were received out of the 298 inquiries. This was a response of eighty-nine plus percent.

The questionnaire was completed by the students, indicating their name, occupational status and their evaluation of growth in academic achievement, employment capability, and improved self-image. Remarks or suggestions for improving the program were negligible and were not included in this study. The responses on the returned questionnaires were tabulated by individual course offerings and total program. The tabulations show the

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix A

<sup>2</sup>Appendix B

<sup>3</sup>Appendix C

students subjective reactions to having taken a course. Also shown are data that, in the opinion of the students, indicate what actually happened to them as a result of completing a course.

The scores of the General Educational Development Tests were tabulated by individual tests and by the test battery as a whole.

### FINDINGS

The results of this study show that the adult education program, as a whole, and individually by subjects taught is, in the opinion of the students, meeting its objectives of increasing academic ability, improving employment capability, and improving self-image. Other factors mentioned earlier, undoubtedly enter into the students achievement of the program objectives. However, in the opinion of the students surveyed, it was indicated that completion of an adult education course assisted them in achievement of the objectives.

Table II discloses what happened to the students, in their opinion, as a result of completing specific courses as related to the objectives of increasing employment capability. Columns one and two indicate objective evidence as seen by the students, resulting from completing a course. Of the 266 people responding to the questionnaire twenty-six indicated that they were helped to get employment and

106 felt that they were able to keep or advance in their present position as a result of taking part in adult education. These people are either now working when they were not, previous to participating in adult education, or they were able to keep a job they had or upgrade their employment after course completion. Columns four and five indicate student opinion concerning the extent to which the course will help them secure employment.

Table III shows, by subjects, the opinion of the students of their change in academic ability resulting from participation in adult education, while table IV evidences student opinion concerning changes in self-image. In both instances opinion was positive toward the value of adult education in these areas. Of the 266 respondents, only forty felt that their academic ability had not improved and but sixteen indicated lack of improvement in self-image.

Table V provides an objective analysis of the number of students showing growth in academic achievement resulting at least partially from participation in the High School Equivalency program as seen by their scores on the General Education Development Test. As a high school or college diploma shows growth in academic ability so also does successful completion of the General Educational Development Test. As previously noted by Verner, this test is valid and reliable in terms of the population upon which it was standardized.

The 1955 norms for the civilian and military restricted forms of the high school level Test of General Educational Development were established for a sample of 38,773 public high school seniors tested in April-June, 1955, just before graduation from a general (non-technical or non-trade) high school. The schools in the standardization sample were selected from the U. S. Office of Education mailing list of public high schools in the continental United States. These schools were so selected that their relative distribution by states (and by enrollment classes within states) was approximately the same as that for all public high schools in the country.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>American Council on Education. "Official Report of Test Results," Tests of General Educational Development, GEDTS Form 30, Washington, D. C.: December, 1969.

TABLE II  
 RATING OF ADULT EDUCATION SUBJECTS  
 STUDIED BY 266 PARTICIPANTS IN THE  
 STUDY IN THE AREA OF EMPLOYMENT CAPABILITY

Course	Has Helped Me Get A Job	Has Helped Me Keep Or Advance In My Job	Will Help Me Get A Job	Has Not Helped Me Become More Employable
Bookkeeping I	8	24	14	8
Bookkeeping II	5	10	4	0
College English I	0	0	4	0
High School Equivalency	6	22	24	0
College Mathematics I	0	4	0	6
College Psychology I	2	2	6	4
Reading Improvement	0	2	2	14
Shorthand I	2	6	0	0
Spelling and Writing	0	4	4	0
Typing I	0	22	14	18
Typing II	3	10	8	4
Total	26	106	80	54



TABLE III

RATING OF ADULT EDUCATION SUBJECTS  
STUDIED BY 266 PARTICIPANTS IN THE  
STUDY IN THE AREA OF ACADEMIC ABILITY

Course	Has Increased My Academic Ability	Has Not Increased My Academic Ability
Bookkeeping I	48	6
Bookkeeping II	13	6
College English I	4	0
High School Equivalency	52	0
College Mathematics I	10	0
College Psychology I	10	4
Reading Improvement	12	6
Shorthand I	6	2
Spelling and Writing	8	0
Typing I	46	8
Typing II	17	8
Total	226	40

TABLE IV  
 RATING OF ADULT EDUCATION  
 SUBJECTS STUDIED BY 266 PARTICIPANTS  
 IN THE STUDY IN THE AREA OF SELF-IMAGE

Course	Has Improved My Self- Image	Has Not Improved My Self-Image
Bookkeeping I	54	0
Bookkeeping II	19	0
College English I	4	0
High School Equivalency	50	2
College Mathematics I	10	0
College Psychology I	12	2
Reading Improvement	18	0
Shorthand I	6	2
Spelling and Writing	8	0
Typing I	51	3
Typing II	18	7
Total	250	16

TABLE V

AN ANALYSIS OF THE NUMBER  
OF ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS  
DOING PASSING WORK IN THE GENERAL  
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TEST BY SUBJECT AREA

Test	Pass	Fail
English	51	7
Literature	57	1
Mathematics	55	3
Natural Science	57	1
Social Studies	53	5
Entire test battery	42	16

The high school equivalency certificate is given further stature by being recognized by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, "Diplomas or Certificates of Equivalency or High School Graduation will be recognized by the association only when they are issued by or on the authority of a State Department of Public Instruction."<sup>9</sup>

In Iowa, provision is made in the Code of Iowa for issuance of the high school equivalency certificate. "The state superintendent of public instruction shall cause to be made available for qualified individuals, residents of the state of Iowa, a high school equivalency certificate."<sup>10</sup>

The General Educational Development Test was taken by fifty-eight of those answering the questionnaire. Of these, forty-two passed and received the High School Equivalency Certificate and sixteen failed the test. The analysis in table V shows how many failed the test, by subjects failed as well as the totals. To pass this test a student must attain an average score of forty-five on all five parts and score no lower than forty on any individual test.

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<sup>9</sup>Neil C. Aslin, Policies and Criteria for the Approval of Secondary Schools. (Chicago: North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, 1970-1971), p. 42.

<sup>10</sup>Iowa, School Laws of Iowa, Sec. 259 A.1 (1966)

## Chapter 4

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was undertaken in order to determine the extent to which the Atlantic adult education program, in the opinion of the participants, was meeting its pre-determined objectives of increasing employment capability, improving academic ability, and improving the self-image of the students. A questionnaire was sent to 298 students who had completed at least one course in the Atlantic adult education program during its first three years of existence, 1968 through 1970. The results of the questionnaire as well as the scores of the General Educational Development Test administered to the students studying for their High School Equivalency Certificate were tabulated and provide the basis for the study.

A survey of the literature in adult education brings to the front the necessity of adequate evaluation of these programs and the fact that program objectives must be so stated that evidence of the degree to which these objectives are being achieved can be obtained.

Far more females than males were enrolled in the adult education classes and consequently the respondents were primarily females, 226 out of a possible 266 persons. Of these women, 100 were working, either full time or part

time for pay, and eighty-eight were housewives.

In determining the degree to which the program was able to make the participants more employable the tabulations show, in the opinion of the respondents, that as a result of completing a class, forty plus percent of them are more employable and thirty plus percent of the total think that they will be helped to get a job.

Academic improvement was felt by eighty-five percent of the students. One hundred percent of the High School Equivalency, Spelling and Writing, College English, and College Math students felt that they had improved academically. The lowest felt improvement in academic ability was Typing II, where sixty-one percent felt that they had improved scholastically.

Student opinion concerning self-image showed that ninety-three plus percent of those surveyed believed that their self-image was improved as a result of completing a course in adult education. One hundred percent of the students in Bookkeeping I and II, Reading Improvement, Spelling and Writing, College English, and College Math saw themselves as being improved in self-image. The slightest improvement in self-image was seventy-two percent in Typing II.

The results of the General Educational Development Test gives objective evidence of increased academic achievement. Seventy plus percent of those attempting the

test battery were successful in obtaining their High School Equivalency Certificate.

For the purposes of the present study, these evidences, buttressed by the addition of scores of the General Educational Development Test, part of which may be attributed to the high school equivalency classes, indicate that to a large degree the program objectives are being met. In the opinion of the students, they are making progress toward goals they have helped determine as desirable and are now enjoying employment, improved self-image, and improved academic ability as a result of participation in adult education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigator, as a result of this study, and as director of adult education in Atlantic has recommended and had accepted by the Board of Education that they expand their adult education objectives to include classes that would "improve the students ability to contribute to family living." This is one of the purposes of adult education as noted by J. Eugene Welden. Classes are now being held with this objective as their goal.

It seems quite obvious that most of the classes have been female oriented. Only fifteen percent of those responding were males. As director, this investigator should encourage the advisory council to strive to make more offerings available which would be focused on men.



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## APPENDIX

Student Evaluation of the  
Atlantic Adult Education Program

30

(Your answers will be considered confidential. They will be summarized and used for improvement of our adult education program. Please return to John Hunter, Director of Special Services, Atlantic Community Schools, Atlantic, Iowa, 50022).

Your name

\_\_\_\_\_ Mr.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Miss \_\_\_\_\_

I. What are you now doing? (Please check one or more.)

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_ Working for pay, full time
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_ Working for pay, part time
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_ In business or vocation for self
- (4) \_\_\_\_\_ In armed forces
- (5) \_\_\_\_\_ Not working, but looking for a job
- (6) \_\_\_\_\_ Not working and not looking for a job
- (7) \_\_\_\_\_ Housewife
- (8) \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please describe)

II. Measurement of increased employment capability.

Please place a check mark in front of the courses you have completed, and place a check mark in the space following it that most accurately describes the result of your having completed the course.

	Course	Has Helped Me Get A Job	Has Helped Me Keep Or Advance In My Job	Will Help Me Get A Job	Has Not Helped Me Become More Employable
-	Bookkeeping I				
-	Bookkeeping II				
-	Shorthand I				
-	Typing I				
-	Typing II				
-	High School Equivalency				
-	Reading Improvement				
-	Spelling and Writing				
-	English				
-	Mathematics				
-	Psychology				

### III. Measurement of increased academic achievement and improved self image.

In this section please indicate your opinion as to whether or not you have felt growth in academic ability and/or improvement in self image. Improved self image might be indicated by personal satisfaction gained from the attainment of a desired goal.

Please place a check mark in front of the courses you have completed, and place a check mark in the space following it that most accurately describes the result of your having completed the course.

	Courses	Has Increased My Academic Ability	Has Not Increased My Academic Ability	Has Improved My Self Image	Has Not Improved My Self Image
-	Bookkeeping I				
-	Bookkeeping II				
-	Shorthand I				
-	Typing I				
-	Typing II				
-	High School Equivalency				
-	Reading Improvement				
-	Spelling and Writing				
-	English				
-	Mathematics				
-	Psychology				

IV. Remarks or suggestions for improving the program: \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX B

Dear Student

We would appreciate your assistance in helping evaluate the present program of adult education in Atlantic.

The general objectives of the adult education program as set forth by the Board of Education are: (1) to increase academic achievement and (2) to increase employment capability. The purpose of the study we are making is to determine to what degree these objectives are being met.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the program we would like to have your reaction to the classes you have completed as they affected you. Through your experience we may be able to improve the program so as to better meet the needs of the community.

Will you please assist us by filling out and returning the enclosed form? Your name will not be used.

You can answer most of the questions very quickly by means of a check mark. An immediate reply would be appreciated and a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



John Hunter

Director, Adult Education

## APPENDIX C

Dear Student,

Sixty eight percent of the Adult Education students who were asked to help us evaluate the Adult Education program have done so. In order to get a more complete picture we need a higher percentage of the students to respond. Won't you help us by completing the questionnaire and returning it in the stamped, addressed envelope? Since you may have misplaced the questionnaire, I am enclosing another.

We are anxious to have your reaction to the Adult Education program so that we may improve.

I know that you are a busy person, but we need the benefit of your experience.

Sincerely yours,

*John Hunter*

John Hunter, Director  
Adult Education